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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

EXCISE

BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

June 23, 1980

CONFIDENTIAL

TO: The Acting Secretary

FROM: EA - Michael H. Armacost, Acting

SUBJECT: Your Meeting with Mr. William J. Butler et al, 11:00 a.m. June 24

You have agreed to meet with Mr. William J. Butler, President of the American Association for the International Commission of Jurists, and five other distinguished leaders in the field of human rights. (list attached at Tab 1). The members of the group will wish to express their concern over the "gross pattern of human rights violations" now occurring in the Republic of Korea in general, and in particular over the arrest, detention and pending trial of opposition leader Kim Dae-Jung.

Background

On May 17 a military crackdown occurred in South Korea: martial law was fully extended throughout the country, universities were closed and many student leaders arrested, political activity was banned and most prominent political leaders were arrested, including opposition leader KIM Dae-Jung and government party head KIM Jong-Pil, strict censorship was imposed and the National Assembly was suspended. Subsequently, a group of military leaders has effectively consolidated its control over the government. It is to these developments that your visitors will be responding.

Members of this group have a long and active interest in human rights issues in Korea, and Messrs. Butler and DeWind at least have been outspokenly dissatisfied with the degree of U.S. Government intervention in Korean human rights issues in the past. Mr. Butler visited Korea in 1974 on behalf of the International Commission of Jurists in order to observe trials, and he returned last year with Mr. DeWind to investigate for the ICJU reports of harassment and persecution of Korean lawyers who defended those involved in human rights cases. The resulting ICJU report was summarized in our 1979 Human Rights Report on Korea (Tab 2).

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY H. Leipe DATE 8/18/82
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

The group has expressed a special interest in the case of Kim Dae-Jung, who was arrested on May 17. Kim has long been an important symbol of democratic aspirations in Korea and was the central focus for opposition to the government of the late President Park Chung-Hee. As such, he remained either in jail or under house arrest from 1976 to mid-1979.

Bob Rich and I will sit in on the meeting. I am attaching at Tab 3 a report on a meeting we had last week with a group of scholars of Korean affairs. It will give you a flavor of their current concerns.

Points to be Made:

-- The U.S. Government had firmly endorsed, both in public and in private, the process of political liberalization which President Choi had launched. We are disappointed with the May 17 events, which effectively interrupted that process, and we are concerned that the stability of the Korean Government, and thus the security of the region, could be in jeopardy.

-- We have made clear to the Korean leaders our view that the long term stability of the nation will be best served by resumption of the process of political development, and that in this connection we will be persuaded by actions, not by words.

-- With particular reference to Kim Dae-Jung, Kim Jong-Pil and the others arrested on May 17, we have stressed the importance we attach to fair and open disposition of the charges against them. We have also pressed for specific information on the welfare and whereabouts of these detained individuals, and we will continue to press for a response.

-- I am very interested in hearing your views on recent developments and policy initiatives we might consider.

Attachments:

Tab 1 - List
Tab 2 - Summarization of ICJU report
Tab 3 - Report: American Scholars Discuss Korea Policy

Drafted:EA/K:DBlakemore:jcm
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Clearance: EA/K - Mr. Rich
HA - Mr. Skiff
S/P - Ms. Walker